

Opening Statement of Chairman Forbes

WASHINGTON— The House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces held a hearing today on [Oversight of U.S. Naval and U.S. Air Force Acquisition Programs in the Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Budget Request](#). Chairman Randy Forbes (R-VA) made the following opening statement as prepared for delivery:

Witness testimony can be found on the [Committee Document Repository website](#) or linked below. All witness testimony is as prepared for, and embargoed until delivery.

"I want to welcome all our members and our distinguished panel of experts to today's hearing that will focus on the Administration's Fiscal Year 2014 budget request.

"In the decade ahead I believe we will increasingly lean on our Seapower and Projection forces to underpin our national security strategy. Our naval forces are deployed around the world, protecting the world's sea lanes and operating forward to deter conflict. Our projection forces are uniquely ready to support a wide range of mobility, strike, and strategic deterrence missions around the globe.

"While I am pleased at the capabilities provided by our forces today, the long-term outlook of our defense posture is being challenged. Naval forces embarked on Carrier Strike Groups and Amphibious Readiness Groups routinely deploy seven to eight months. Because of the Navy's sustained surge, our nuclear aircraft carriers are depleting their nuclear reactor propulsion units at accelerating rates. Our bomber fleet averages 37 years old and our venerable tanker fleet averages an even older 48 years.

"While we are meeting the minimum requirements of our ever-retreating national strategy, it is painfully obvious that our future readiness is being leveraged to pay for our current requirements. The most recent example of the Administration's direction is the 30 year shipbuilding plan that was partially submitted on Monday. The administration once again proposes the early retirement of seven cruisers and two amphibious ships in fiscal year 2015, well before the end of their service lives. With 31 ships being retired over just the next two years, we are headed towards a fleet size of 270 battle force ships by FY15. Decline is a choice, and I believe this new plan willingly chooses to continue the slow, painful decline of robust American Seapower.

"The plan also includes a significant increase to the overall ship construction budget to accommodate the Ohio Class ballistic missile submarine replacement. At over five billion dollars, these strategic investments in our nuclear triad are essential. I remain concerned that during the procurement and construction of the Ohio-Class replacement the shipbuilding budget will demand an average of \$19 billion per year. To fund both this new boat and the battle force it will take either a substantial increase in the shipbuilding account or an effort to fund the Ohio-class replacement from outside this account. I look forward to continuing to work with the Department and the Navy to address this funding shortfall.

"During the Navy posture hearing earlier this month, military leaders indicated that they were pleased at the investment in the ship construction accounts and highlighted the dearth of ships in construction when they took office. To arrest this decline, this administration embraced a plan that includes an aggressive strategy to build a moderately capable surface combatant called the Littoral Combat Ship that adds over 50 ships over the term of the plan. But unfortunately, the mission modules that are integral to support this twenty year seaframe are still in the research and development, complicating the Navy's ability to respond to basic mine counter measure missions and anti submarine missions. Just as the fleet is shrinking from the retirement and procurement of less major surface combatants and amphibious ships, we are filling these shortfalls with smaller surface combatants and support vessels. We need to take steps to arrest the decline of our battle force fleet.

"As to the Air Force projection forces, I am pleased that we may be initiating the semblance of a credible recapitalization plan. With the support of an investment in the KC-46 tanker program and strategic emphasis on the Long Range Strike Bomber, I believe that the Air Force is on the right path with the right platforms for our nation's future. I look forward to supporting these continued investments in our mobility and projection forces capabilities.

"As to the Marine Corps, I understand the Amphibious Combat Vehicle is the Marine Corps top priority for ground force modernization and the marines have completed the required analysis of alternatives. We need to get this program right for the future of the Marine Corps and I look forward to receiving an update on this critical program.

"I would be remiss if I also did not recognize the Navy in providing a credible long term acquisition strategy that uses block buy and multiyear procurements to secure steep reductions in overall naval pricing. Not only is this a good strategy for our nation taxpayers, it provides the long term surety to our industrial base that will allow them to make critical investments for their long term health.

"My friends, we are at a strategic inflection point in terms of our defense policy. Concurrent with the new strategy being contemplated by this administration, my fear is that the overall capabilities of our military will continue to atrophy and our inability to be able to operate forward and project power will embolden regional instability. In the end, further defense reductions will be paid for in the lives of our servicemembers. I refuse to accept this premise and will do everything in my power to arrest further decline by modernizing and growing our capabilities.

Witnesses

Lieutenant General Robert R. Allardice USAF

Vice Commander, Air Mobility Command, U.S. Air Force

- Witness Statement [[PDF](#)]
- Witness Biography [[PDF](#)]

Lieutenant General Charles R Davis USAF

Military Deputy, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, U.S. Air Force

- Witness Statement [[PDF](#)]
- Witness Biography [[PDF](#)]

Lieutenant General Richard P. Mills USMC

Deputy Commander for Combat Development and Integration, MCCDC, U.S. Marine Corps

- Witness Biography [[PDF](#)]

Vice Admiral Allen G. Myers USN

Deputy Chief Naval Operations for Integration of Capabilities and Resources (N-8), U.S. Navy

- Witness Biography [[PDF](#)]

The Honorable Sean J. Stackley

Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Research, Development and Acquisition), Department of Defense

- Witness Biography [[PDF](#)]